

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 8554

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BE, CG

SUBJECT: RESUMPTION OF MINISTERIAL MEETINGS WITH ZAIRE:
LEBURTON VISIT

REF: BRUSSELS 8468

1. SUMMARY. FOLLOWING ISSUANCE OF BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY COMMUNIQUE WELCOMING REPORTS OF PRESIDENT MOBUTU'S WILLINGNESS TO RESUME MINISTERIAL MEETINGS WITH GOB, VIEW OF SITUATION HERE HAS BEEN CLOUDED BY CONFLICTING REPORTS OF MOBUTU'S ATTITUDE. BELGIAN PRESS IS CRITICIZING LEBURTON'S "PERSONAL DIPLOMACY"; SOME COMMENTATORS ARE EXPRESSING CONCERN THAT IT MAY WORSEN RELATIONS. YOUNG SOCIALISTS HAVE VOTED DISAPPROVAL OF PARTY LEADERSHIP'S INVITATION TO MPR TO ATTEND FORTHCOMING SOCIALIST CONGRESS. END SUMMARY.

2. BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY ISSUED COMMUNIQUE OCTOBER 30 NOTING THAT PRESS HAD REPORTED "DESIRE" OF PRESIDENT MOBUTU TO RESUME BI-ANNUAL MINISTERIAL MEETINGS WITH BELGIUM BUT THAT GOB HAD NOT BEEN OFFICIALLY INFORMED OF ZAIRIAN POSITION. COMMUNIQUE STATED THAT, IF VERIFIED, NEWS COULD NOT HELP BUT PLEASE BELGIUM "TO EXTENT THAT IT CONFORMS WITH THE GOVERN-
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MENTAL DECLARATION (I.E., THAT PORTION OF TINDEMANS

GOVERNMENT'S APRIL 30 POLICY STATEMENT RELATING TO IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH ZAIRE) AND WITH THE DEMARCHES UNDERTAKEN BY OUR NEW AMBASSADOR IN KINSHAS IN THE COURSE OF HIS CONTACTS WITH PRESIDENT MOBUTU." COMMUNIQUE CLOSED WITH STATEMENT THAT GOB IS PERSUADED PROBLEMS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES CAN BE RESOLVED ONLY THROUGH OPEN DIALOGUE.

3. ACCORDING TO FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCE, COMMUNIQUE WAS EFFORT BY GOB TO PUT STEPS TOWARD RESUMPTION OF MINISTERIAL MEETINGS BACK INTO FRAMEWORK OF OFFICIAL CONTACTS BETWEEN GOB AND GOZ, RATHER THAN THOSE UNDERTAKEN BY LEADER OF SOCIALIST OPPOSITION. SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGED, HOWEVER, THAT FOREIGN MINISTRY DOES NOT KNOW WHERE MATTER NOW STANDS OR WHAT WILL BE NEXT BELGIAN STEP. SITUATION BECAME CONFUSED FOLLOWING REPORTS HERE THAT ZAIRIAN PRESS AGENCY, AZAP, HAD STATED IN REACTION TO BELGIAN COMMUNIQUE THAT MOBUTU HAD NOT AGREED TO RESUME MEETINGS AND THAT GOZ WOULD AWAIT BELGIAN REACTION TO LEBURTON VISIT BEFORE MAKING FINAL DECISION ON RESUMPTION. BELGIAN UNCERTAINTY WAS COMPOUNDED BY REPORTS THAT LEBURTON TOLD PRESS IN KINSHASA NOVEMBER 1 THAT MEETINGS OF "MIXED COMMISSION" WOULD BE RESUMED AS "COMMON GESTURE" BY TWO SIDES TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCE CONFIRMED PRESS REPORT THAT AMBASSADOR KERREMANS HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO SEEK APPOINTMENT WITH MOBUTU BUT DID NOT YET KNOW WHETHER MEETING HAD TAKEN PLACE.

4. BELGIUM'S CATHOLIC PRESS HAS BEEN ALMOST UNANIMOUSLY CRITICAL OF LEBURTON'S EXERCISE IN PRIVATE DIPLOMACY, WITH SOME COMMENTATORS EXPRESSING CONCERN THAT RESULTING CONFUSION MAY ONLY WORSEN RELATIONS. MAN RUYS, IN WIDELY-READ FLEMISH DAILY DE STANDAARD, SEES MOBUTU AS BEING GENUINELY INTERESTED IN IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH BELGIANS BUT NOT WANTING LEBURTON'S EFFORTS TO MAKE IT APPEAR THAT ZAIRE IS ASKING BELGIUM TO RESUME MINISTERIAL MEETINGS. SOCIALIST AND LIBERAL PAPERS SO FAR HAVE ABSTAINED

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FROM COMMENT. CONGRESS OF YOUNG SOCIALISTS HELD NOVEMBER 2-3, ON OTHER HAND, VOTED TO DISAPPROVE INVITATION ISSUED BY SOCIALIST PARTY BUREAU TO ZAIRIAN MPR REPRESENTATIVES TO ATTEND PARTY'S COTRINAL CONGRESS NOVEMBER 16-17. YOUNG SOCIALISTS CHARACTERIZED MPR AS ORGAN OF "CRIMINAL, DICTATORIAL REGIME OF EXPLOITERS." FIRESTONE

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